Oklahoma Chess Monthly

DECEMBER 2020

Chess News and Chess History for Oklahoma

Bobby Darin: A Cautionary Chess Tale

In This Issue:

- Ryan Amburgy Earns NM Title
- A Tale of Two Bobbys
- IM Donaldson Book Review
- Plus News Bites, Game of the Month, Puzzles, Top 25 List, Tournament Reports, and more.

A Tale of Two Bobbys

Bobby Darin and Bobby Fischer

• Think "The Queen's Gambit" Will Lead to Big Momentum for Chess?
• Here's a Cautionary Tale About That…

by Tom Braunlich

The past couple of months in 2020 has seen the phenomenal success of the Netflix seven-part mini-series *"The Queen's Gambit"* that has generated tons of positive buzz in the American popular culture. The series went to #1 around the world.

Sales of chess sets have tripled. Kids are asking their parents if they can learn how to play. Two new players joined our Saturday morning Zoom chess club "Chess Fools of Tulsa" because of it. Chess personalities are appearing on *CBS Sunday Morning* and *CNN* and elsewhere in the media. (Don't miss this recent lengthy interview with Judit Polgar and Garry Kasparov together on a segment called "A Game-Changing Moment for Chess" – here: https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2020/11/17/chess-queens-gambit-amanpour-garry-kasparov-judit-polgar.cnn/video/playlists/amanpour/

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Chess on the Internet is booming.

All of this has led to comparisons between this event and popularity following from the famous Fischer-Spassky Match, which I am old enough to remember. It's not a bad comparison – IF you realize that the Fischer-Spassky Match was a far bigger phenomenon in 1972. It was worldwide front-page news for two months, and everyone was following as the Cold-War drama played out in Iceland. The games were published in the pages of the *Tulsa World*. The local evening TV news would report the results of each game. I still remember Tulsa Channel 6 Clayton Vaughan saying, "Today Bobby Fischer won the 6th game of the World Championship match in 41 moves to take the lead in the match for the first time, with 3½ to 2½." ABC's popular weekend show "The Wide World of Sports" had some segments hosted by GM Larry Evans with him showing some key moments of games on a demo board for the camera.

So, "The Queen's Gambit" is not to that level, but it is indeed comparable and represents an opportunity for the sport of chess to take advantage.

But with that opportunity comes another lesson from 1972… a cautionary tale. In the meta-game chess is playing with other sports for attention in our crowded media world, we now have the "initiative" and are "on the attack."

But for every boom like 1972 there comes a bust like 1973.

Let me explain the saga of the *Bobby Darin International Chess Classic*, for an example of the pitfalls of popularity that await chess now.

The Fischer-Spassky match spawned many opportunities in 1972. Young kids like me were inspired to take up the game and dream about becoming a grandmaster player. Movie celebrities were showing up at tournaments in Los Angeles. The USCF tried to talk with corporate sponsors about raising the profile of the game.

> "Along with millions of other people, I had my personal interest in chess reawakened last year via the Fischer-Spassky Match. I have found my own involvement in the world of chess to be an extremely rewarding experience." — Bobby Darin, 1973.

Church's Fried Chicken (which was owned by Frank Church, a tournament player) sponsored a big international tournament in San Antonio, featuring many big stars including Karpov, Petrosian, Keres, Browne, etc., as well as a couple of lower-rated locals like Texas Senior Master Ken Smith and IM Mario Campos-Lopez (Mexican champion). Bobby Fischer gave an appearance as a guest. The event was phenomenal. (And an excellent tournament book "San Antonio 1972" was later published with games annotated by all of the players, which I recommend).

As the year drew to a close others became interested in sponsoring. One of those inspired was mega-star Bobby Darin.

Bobby Darin, briefly, for those of you who don't know, was a major TV, film, and music star of the 1960s. As a musician he composed and sang many hit recordings, including "Mack the Knife" (#1 for nine weeks in 1962), "Beyond the Sea," "If I was a Carpenter," "Dream Lover," and many others. As an actor he was nominated for an Oscar in 1961 for his role in "Captain Newman, MD" and appeared in 1960's "Come September" with Sandra Dee, the biggest female star of the day, whom he later married.

Bobby Darin, with his nifty futuristic car…

Darin playing chess with his wife, Sandra Dee, on the set of That Funny Feeling, 1965

He was frequently described as "brash" (a nice way of saying *arrogant* – his stated goal was to become 'better than Sinatra' at everything), but everyone recognized he had the talent to back it up. Musically he was successful in every style, including Rock'n'Roll (he was inducted into the Rock Hall of Fame), Country (he wrote "18 Yellow Roses"), Folk ("Simple Song of Freedom"), Jazz, and standard Sinatra-style Pop music. He often performed as a headliner in Las Vegas, and appeared on dozens of TV shows. He was a megastar.

He also had been a low-level chess fan most of his life. Pictured above is him playing chess with Sandra Dee in one of his films. Many Hollywood actors were also chess players, because it was an easily-portable game that could be pulled out when shooting movie scenes on location and there were long delays while the director and cameramen were busy setting up the lighting for the next scene.

Darin playing chess with actor Jose Ferrar on the set of a movie. Ferrar won the Oscar in 1950 for Cyrano de Bergerac

In 1972 Bobby Darin starred in his own TV variety series, cleverly called, "The Bobby Darin Show." Like many shows at the time, it consisted of several some comedy skits combined with musical performances before a live audience, featuring guest stars each week – except Darin seemed to get more interesting stars than the usual TV performers of the day. (i.e., he had guests like Stevie Wonder, Dusty Springfield, Petula Clark, Flip Wilson, etc.)

Of course in 1972 Darin was among many inspired by the Fischer-Spassky match – so much so that by late 1972 he was including a "chess segment" into his TV show, in which he would take a minute to show a cool chess move or some other thing that interested him about the game, using either a table board or a wall board (see photos here).

Darin discussing chess moves on his TV show.

By late 1972 Darin, who was always wanting to try new things, decided he wanted to sponsor what he hoped would be the 'greatest event in the history of chess" – a 16-player all-top-grandmaster invitational event.

He contacted the USCF and by January 1973 arrangements were made and announced in the press for *"The Bobby Darin International Chess Classic"* – to be held for 3 weeks in October, 1973, and featuring a $25,000 prize fund (in addition to all expenses paid for the

Continued on page 12

Amburgy Earns NM Title

Ryan Amburgy earned the National Master title on November 29, 2020, at the Texas State and Amateur Championship in Dallas with a fine 5-2 performance in the full-length over-the-board tournament, which included two wins over NMs and a draw with the GM-elect who won the event.

Crosstable of the event here:
http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?202011293772.1-15437654

Ryan thus becomes only the second Okie 'homegrown' player to earn this title since the 1980s, and no doubt if he keeps going has more such honors to surpass.

"My next goal would be to get FM," Ryan said. The FM title requires getting a published 2300 rating (and paying FIDE a fee!). "My FIDE is really low due to the lack of FIDE tournaments so that will take some time." He has other ambitions beyond that as well.

Ryan has benefitted by working with *GM Daniel Naroditsky*. "I have been working with GM Naroditsky for a little over a year. We met at a camp in Tucson last August. No doubt, Daniel's coaching has played a big role in my recent performance. He's currently the #1 rated bullet player on chess.com (and #8 in blitz)."

As for how Ryan has been able to keep finding opportunities for improving his over-the-board regular rating during this pandemic year of shutdowns and tournament cancellations, he said, "Thankfully the Dallas Chess Club has had a lot of tournaments since opening back up in August; probably more events than anywhere in the country right now. I was also able to play in a small event in Indianapolis over fall break where I went 3.5/4 and gained some points, along with the US Class Championship in DC. My next event will be the North American Junior Championship right before Christmas." He was supported in attending these events by his chess-dad Chris Amburgy.

Ryan Amburgy at the Dallas tournament. Photo by Rebecca Rutledge

Ryan annotates this key game from Dallas:

Amburgy, Ryan (2176)
Wu, Derek (2235) [D00]
Texas State Championship Dallas, TX (7), 28.11.2020
[Notes by Ryan Amburgy]

1.d4 [This is the game that decides everything. Lose, and it's over for me (in getting my NM title). Draw, and I either get 2199 or 2200 and it's totally out of my hands. Win, and I get it no question.]

1...Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Bf4 e6 [I had focused most of my pregame searches on the move c5 instead, so this was a somewhat annoying surprise.]

4.Nb5 Bb4+!? [This is a move that high depth engines prefer, but a move that is VERY risky to play as black. He has to play pretty accurate for a good position.]

[4...Na6 is common; or 4...Bd6 I might have had ONE long time control game in this.]

5.c3 Ba5 [This is the point of ...Bb4, black defends the c7 pawn with an awkward

TOP 25

For DECEMBER 2020

Active Oklahoma Players

	Player	This Month	Change	
1	Advait Patel	2537	0	
2	Jeffrey Haskel	2355	-7	
3	Howard Zhong	2307	0	
4	Ryan Amburgy	2208	22	▲
5	Tom Braunlich	2200	0	▼
6	Mark Hulsey	2199	0	
7	Anthony Paolercio	2080	0	
8	Veronika Zilajeva	2080	0	
9	Tom Patton	2077	0	
10	Charles D Unruh	2063	0	
11	James Long	2054	0	
12	Michael Nugent	2042	0	
13	Matt Dalthorp	2029	0	
14	Charles M Unruh	2024	0	
15	Chuck Johnson	2010	0	
16	Jeff Colbert	2008	0	
17	Stephen Gehly	2000	0	
18	David Luscomb	1995	0	
19	Paul Hodgden	1935	0	▲
20	Maxwell Barnes	1932	35	▲
21	Joe Dean Veal	1928	0	▲
22	Wayne Hatcher	1926	0	▲
23	Logan Zachare	1925	-37	▼
24	Harold Brown Jr.	1901	0	
25	Shaun Graham	1893	0	

Player of the Month

RYAN AMBURGY

Congratulations to Ryan Amburgy for earning the NM title, especially in such an aggravating year!

bishop dance.]

6.a4

[This is the idea black must beware of. White goes to trap the bishop on a5.]

6...a6 7.b4 Nc6

Of the choices here for black, I would say this is absolutely best.

• 7...Bxb4 8.cxb4 axb5 9.axb5 Rxa1 10.Qxa1 I feel white has a very comfy position here as the b-pawns cramp black and the queen can invade.

• 7...axb5 8.axb5! is what almost everyone tries against me in blitz, and I have won essentially every game. This is VERY good for white because blacks bishop is almost eternally stuck on a5.]

8.bxa5 axb5 9.axb5 Nxa5 10.e3 Bd7 11.Nf3

[11.Bd3 Nc4 was played in a game where GM Naroditsky was white]

11...Ne4

12.Bd3N

I was thinking during the game that this pawn gambit was needed but I had another move that, while the engine likes more, I like less.

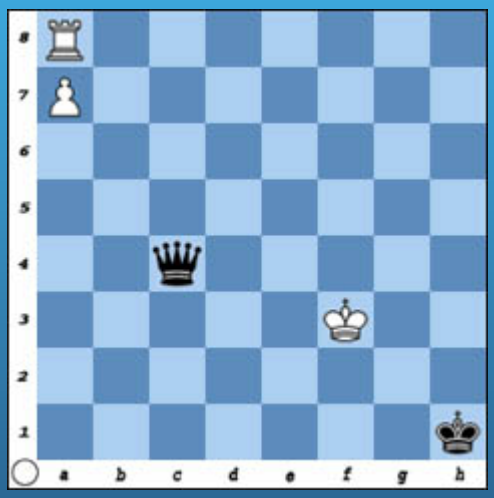
•12.Qc2? Is actually a dreadful move here. Holding the pawn is not how you play this position. 12...Nc4! And black won quite easily in Kiewra-Shankland. White simply cannot get developed.;

•12.Rc1N is the better way to defend the pawn. The engine says =, but I would say black has a preferable position here.

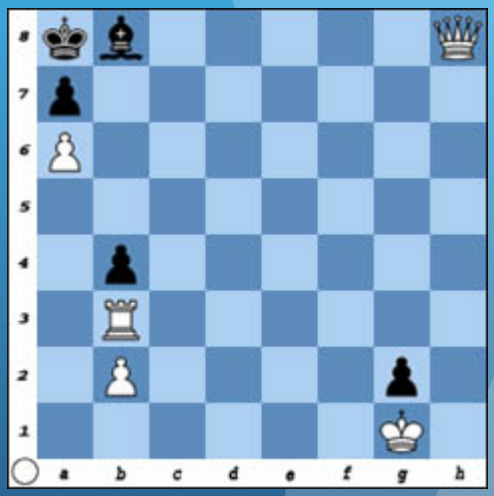
12...Nxc3 [This actually quite surprised me I

PUZZLES

Answers Next Page



White to move and win. (Medium)
HINT: “Behind every great man stands a great woman.”



White to move and force checkmate in 3 moves. (Difficult)

didn't think he would grab the pawn.

[12...0-0 13.0-0 Nc4 is pretty equal]

13.Qd2

[13.Qc2 is possible, but certainly riskier than Qd2. 13...Nxb5 I didn't trust my compensation here, but probably if I take h7 I have enough here 14.Bxh7 its too hard to judge the comp here. Black could be better here.]

13...Ne4

[I took a think here. I realized now that my initial plan (Bxe4 and Rxa5), just plain didn't work. So I came up with something new!]

14.Qc2! [14.Bxe4?! is refuted by the very nice zwischenzug 14...Nb3! 15.Rxa8 white actually has a better position than I thought but it's still bad. 15...Qxa8 16.Qc3 dxe4 17.Qxb3 Qa1+ *(17...Qa5+?? I thought just won for black but white can block with the knight...)* 18.Qd1 Qxd1+ 19.Kxd1 exf3 20.gxf3 Bxb5 21.Bxc7 Kd7 22.Bg3 Ra8 Black might not win this but he is the only one trying.]

14...Nc4 15.0-0

[Suddenly, its not so clear how black escapes from this massive bind that he is in.]

15...Rxa1

[Not bad, but 15...Ned6! is best. 16.Bxc4 black can now choose between giving me full compensation for the pawn, or giving back the pawn with equality. 16...Nxc4 *(16...Rxa1* black can keep the pawn but white will stop him from castling which will be enough*)* 17.Bxc7 Qc8= Black castles next, with equality.

If 15...Bxb5!? 16.Bxc7 Qc8 17.Rxa8 Qxa8 18.Bxe4 dxe4 19.Ng5 h6 20.Nxe4 0ñ0 the engine tells me black is fine in this position, but I do not buy it.]

16.Rxa1 Ncd6?

[Wrong knight.]

[16...Ned6 transposes to the version of Ned6 where black keeps a pawn but loses castling. 17.Bxc4 Nxc4 18.Ne5 Bxb5 *(18...0-0* not too late to give the pawn back*)* 19.Nxc4 dxc4 20.Bxc7 Qc8 *(20...Qxc7?! 21.Ra8+ Ke7 22.Rxh8)* 21.Bd6 with an

Answers to the Puzzles

(1) Black is, if nothing else, about to give perpetual check, so to win white must take quick action. 1. Rh8+ Kg1 and now 2. a8=Q? does not work as black gives perpetual check (look for yourself if you don't believe me). Instead, white plays the shocking 2. Rh1+!!, Kxh1 3. a8=Q! and now white can respond to black's checks with a discovered check by the queen 'standing behind him' followed soon by a checkmate on the g2 square. For example, 3...Qc3+ 4. Kf2 and mate, or 3...Qf7+ 4. Kg3+ and mate. Or 3...Kg1 4. Qa7+, Kh2 5. Qh7+,Kg1 6. Qg6+ and mate.

(2) You must mate in 3, mate in 4 is easy and not good enough. Also, you must avoid stalemates, or allowing black to play ...Bh2+ and delay your mate. To do all this you must totally control Black's moves and give him just one move to play each turn. The solution is 1. Rh3! b3 2. Rh1!! Black now has to capture, but this opens the diagonal 2...h1=Q 3. Qxh1 mate!

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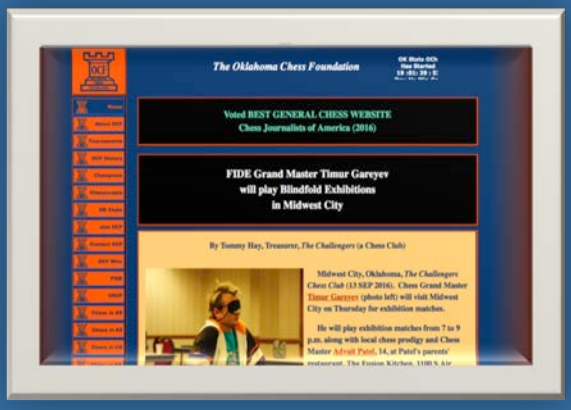
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equal position, but I would take white any day.]

17.Bxe4!

[The beginning. Black has two options here but neither relieves him]

17...dxe4

[Or 17...Nxe4 18.Bxc7 Qc8 19.b6 0-0 20.Ne5. Black might be castled here, but it doesn't matter. White is dominating this.]

18.b6!!

[Absolutely key! I give up the f3 knight knowing the c7 pawn will be better.]

18...cxb6 [The only chance. If 18...c6 19.Nd2+ is the game but black cant stop Qc5 so he's done; OR 18...exf3 19.bxc7 I get the d6 knight as a bonus.]

19.Nd2?

[This mistake should have blown this for me]

[19.Bxd6 exf3 I couldn't find a good continuation here, but I had one. 20.Qe4! Bc6 *(20...fxg2 21.Qxb7)* 21.Qe5 black doesn't really have a good way to deal with everything here 21...Qf6 22.Ra8+ *(22.d5* is an attempt for even more but it's hardly necessary.*)* 22...Kd7 23.Qxf6 *(23.Rxh8?? Qg6ñ+* dramatically turns the tables*)* 23...gxf6 24.Rxh8 Kxd6 25.gxf3+ñ black has two pawns for the exchange, but I'm winning h7 and he has two pairs of doubled pawns. It wont be easy, but I'll win.]

19...Nf5?! [The wrong square. Both b5 and c8 were completely even positions.]

20.g4! [Kicking the knight off d6, this will be important later.]

20...Ne7?? Black actually has a 'save' here, but it is ridiculous:

[20...Nh4 21.Bc7 Qc8 *(21...Qg5? 22.Ra8+ Ke7 23.Rxh8 Qxg4+ 24.Bg3+ñ* amounts to exactly nothing*)* 22.Nxe4 Nf3+ 23.Kg2 *(23.Kf1 Bb5+* forces Kg2 Bc6. Who is going to come up with THIS?!?!!*)* 23...Bc6!! black gets saved by the knight check on e1. 24.Kxf3 otherwise it just leads to an equal liquidation *(24.Qxc6+ bxc6 25.Nd6+ Kd7 26.Nxc8 Kxc7 27.Ra7+ Kb8 28.Kxf3 Rxc8 29.Rxf7 Rc7 30.Rf8+ Rc8 31.Rf4Ɛ* white actually has some advantage in this rook endgame because he isn't down a pawn and has a much better rook. Black needs some accuracy to draw this one.*)* 24...0-0 25.Bd6 Rd8 White has several good tries, but black somehow gets his piece back in all lines. 26.Kf4 *(26.d5 exd5 27.Ng5 g6 28.Be5 h6* white still cannot hang on to all of his pieces *29.Nxf7 Kxf7 30.Bd4=* he still has plenty for the pawn though*)* 26...f6 27.h4 Qd7 28.h5 *(28.Bb4 Qc7+ 29.Kf3 f5)* 28...Bxe4 29.Qc7 Qxd6+ 30.Qxd6 Rxd6 31.Kxe4= despite blacks extra pawn, white is pressing this endgame. Still a draw though.]

21.Bc7 Qc8 22.Nxe4 0-0 23.Nd6+ [That queen on c8 is such a great piece you know.]

23...Nd5 24.Nxc8 Rxc8

[I had easier wins here but I wasnt going for anything too easy at this point]

25.e4

[25.Ra7 was much better than this. 25...Nxc7 26.Rxb7]

25...Nxc7 26.Qb3

[its still only a matter of time though. Two pieces cant defend a queen]

26...Nb5 27.d5 exd5 28.exd5 h6 29.Qd3 Nd6 30.h3 f5 31.Qg3 Ne4 32.Qe5 Nf6 33.gxf5 Re8 34.Qc7 Bxf5 35.Qxb7 Be4? [35...Bxh3 resists longer. 36.d6 Bd7 37.Qxb6 with this passer there is no way on the planet black ever holds this. Still, it will take quite a long time.]

36.Ra7 1-0

This month's fun GOTM was submitted by Maxwell Barnes, and is presented with his annotations.

NM Weaver, Richard (2200)
Barnes, Maxwell (1873) [D79]
DCC Fide Open (2), 24.10.2020
By Max Barnes

This was my first win against a National Master in classical tournament play! I wasn't able to prepare for him since he had never played FIDE rated and therefore had no games in the database, but luckily he played an opening that I had faced about a month ago, so I knew what to do.

1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 g6

I'm essentially just going to mirror my opponent's moves until I get a chance to trade off into an endgame.

4.Bg2 Bg7 5.0-0 0-0 6.Nc3 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.d4 Nc6 9.Bf4 Be6!?

This was an interesting move that I came up with over the board. My plan in this position is to play Qb6 and Ne4 at some point, but after those moves I have a loose pawn on d5. I figured that Be6 would be a nice move because it doesn't hinder the dark square bishop's development (as it is fianchettoed) and it would solve my d5 problem.

10.Rc1 Qb6 11.Na4 Qb5 12.b3 Nd7 13.Qd2 Rfd8 14.e3 Rac8 15.Nc5?

This move might not actually deserve a question mark, but my knight on d7 wasn't good compared to white's knight, which is completely corralling my queen. White will have c5 as an almost permanent outpost (if I were to play b6 then my queen would probably have some very serious problems) and so there is no reason to rush into c5 quickly.

[15.Ng5 Bf5 16.Nc3]

15...Nxc5 16.Rxc5 Qb6 17.Rfc1 h6

[Threatening a very scary ...g5 pawn move attacking the Bishop.]

18.h4 f6 19.Bf1 Bf5?

So, here I saw his threat of Rb5, but I thought that after Qa6 Rxd5 Qa3 I would still be better. However, I missed a tactic that he has: Rxc6! [Better was 19...a6=]

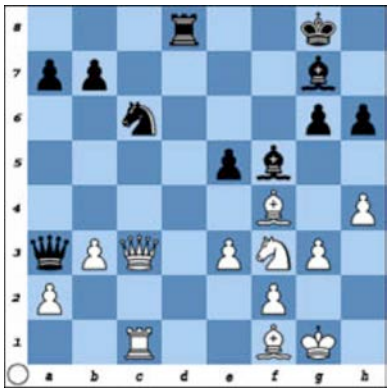
[TB Note —This is an example of Max's improving strength. He sees the threat but does not react automatically with defense. He instead tries to look further, for holes, although in this case he miscalculated.]

20.Rb5 Qa6 21.Rxd5 Qa3 22.Rxd8+? [22.Rxc6 bxc6 *(22...Rxc6 23.Rxd8+; 22...Rxd5 23.Rxc8+ Bxc8 24.Bc4)* 23.Ra5!]

22...Rxd8 23.Qc3 e5=

[He must find the draw here or else he loses.]

24.dxe5 fxe5



25.Qc4+?

25.e4! The only draw. All else fails:

- 25.Bc4+ Kh7 26.Nxe5 Nxe5 27.Bxe5

Bxe5 28.Qxe5 Qxc1+;

- 25.Bxh6 Bxh6; 25.Bg5 hxg5 26.Nxg5 Qe7

25...Kh7 26.e4

[Note by TB: The reason this move order doesn't work for white is that his queen is already committed to c4. If it were still on c3 white would have been able to reply to black's next move with 27. Bxe5! after which if black exchanges twice on e5 and then captures the loose rook on c1, white will have a perpetual check with Qe6+ at the end. Not very easy to see at all!]

26...Bxe4 27.Qxe4 exf4 28.Qxf4

This allows me to get a piece-winning tactic. Try to find it!

28...Rf8 29.Qe3 Rxf3 30.Qxf3 Qxc1 31.h5

White is still holding on here, but because we both have 30 seconds, one of us is bound to make a mistake. Hopefully it isn't the guy up a knight!

31...Ne5 32.hxg6+ Nxg6 33.Kh2?? [A bad blunder in time pressure.]

33...Qxf1 0-1

Graham, Shaun (1906)
Donnersmarck, Alexis (1412) [A34]
86th Southwest Open, 07.09.2020
[Notes by Shaun Graham]

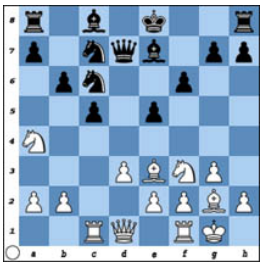
Graham shows some terrific variations in a game from the Southwest Open in which he won the Reserve Section. (TB)

1.c4 c5

Judging by the number of computer moves, this was the strongest 1400 player of all time!

2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2 Nc7 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 Be7 9.Be3 f6 10.Rc1 Qd7 11.Qb3

Check out this variation: 11.Na4 b6 and now:



12.d4! exd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 (the bishop is immune because Bc6 winning the queen follows) ...Rb8 15.b4! with a serious advantage for white.]

11...b6 12.Nd2 Bb7 13.Nb5 Na5 14.Nxc7+ Qxc7 15.Qa4+ Qd7 16.Qxd7+ Kxd7 17.Bh3+ Ke8 18.Nc4 [18.b4 cxb4 19.Rc7 Bd5 20.Nc4 **slight edge for white.**]

18...Nc6 19.Bd2 Kf7 20.f4 Nd4 21.Rf2 e4 [This slight inaccuracy provides white with some chances. 21...exf4 was better] **22.Bg2 f5 23.Ne5+ Ke6 24.dxe4 fxe4 25.e3 Nf5 26.g4 Nd6 27.Bc3 Bf6 28.Rd2 Bxe5 29.Bxe5 Nf7 30.Bxg7 Rhg8 31.f5+ Ke7 32.f6+** [Strong but 32.Rf1 was also a consideration] 32...Ke6 33.Rcd1 Rad8 34.g5 [Unnecessary but was running very low on time.] 34...Rxd2 35.Bh3+ Kd6 36.Rxd2+ Bd5

[After this, it is a matter of technique]

37.Bf5 Nxg5 38.Kf2 Rd8 39.h4 Nf7 40.Bxe4 Ke5 41.Bxh7 Rd7 42.e4 Bc6 43.Rxd7 Bxd7 44.Bg8 Be8 45.Ke3 Ke6 46.h5 Kd7 47.h6 Nxh6 48.Bxh6 a5 49.f7 Bxf7 50.Bxf7 b5 51.e5 Ke7 52.Bg8 a4 53.e6 Ke8 54.Kd3 a3 55.bxa3 Ke7 56.a4 bxa4 57.Kc4 a3 58.Kxc5 Ke8 59.Kd6 Kd8 60.Bf7 1-0

DEC 19-20 RED RIVER OPEN Oklahoma City OK

Embassy Suites Oklahoma City Downtown Medical Center, 741 North Phillips Avenue, OKC, OK 73104. US Chess Grand Prix Points: 20 (Enhanced). US Chess Junior Grand Prix

Open: This section is FIDE rated and uses FIDE rules. The tournament will use USCF ratings for pairings and prize purposes. Foreign players must disclose their FIDE ID number before 1st round in order to play in Open section. $$ $500-$250-$125. Class prizes if any, depend on entries. EF: $90, by 12/14 else $100. Senior/Birthday during tournament/Additional Family Member in Open section/Reentry from Amateur section $55 by 12/14 else $65. Reentry from Open section to Open section is not allowed.

Amateur: Open to players rated Under 1800. EF: $60, by 12/14 else $70. Senior/Birthday during tournament/Additional Family Member in Amateur section/Reentry $35 by 12/14 else $45. Reentry is allowed from other sections if player is qualified to play in Amateur. Prizes are 25% of Amateur entry fees. TD's discretion in allotting the 25% among classes. Tournament reserves the right to use FIDE rules on electronic devices and on starting White's clock at start of a round. Clocks will be set to 'halt at end'.

Both Open and Amateur: 5SS, G/90; 30 second increment. Rds. Sat 12/19: 10:00 am, 2:45 pm, 7:16pm, Sun: 9:30 am - 2:15 pm. Default late forfeiture time is one hour. TD may extend this time at TD's discretion. One 1/2 point bye available if requested before end of rd. 2 and before receiving full point bye, Note that unless TD rules otherwise on a case by case basis, withdrawals and last round byes are not eligible for prizes. Registration should be done online at www.dallaschess.com

K-12 Under 1200 Scholastic Joiner on Sat. 12/19 (one day event). 5SS, G/30: d5. Open to players rated under 1200 by USCF or unrated. EF: $30 by 11/19, $40 thereafter; Registration must be done online at www.dallaschess.com *Note that entry fee includes US Chess Federation membership for current USCF nonmembers.* Entries do not count toward base in Open and Amateur. Rd. 1 at 9:20 am, rest ASAP with small lunch break. Prizes: Trophies to top 12 individuals, five teams and top three unrated. Medals to Players who do not win a trophy.

ALL Sections: HOTEL RATES: $99/99/109/119, 405-239-3900 reserve by 11/18 and ask for Dallas Chess Club rate. Parking for overnight registered hotel guests $14 per day. Entries/questions: Dallas Chess Club, C/O Barbara Swafford, 2709 Longhorn Trail, Crowley, TX 76036. Info: Barb Swafford, 214-632-9000, info@dallaschess.com, www.dallaschess.com. Add $5 for CC phone entries; pre-reg. requires pre-payment. After 12/16 all registration and changes online only; all changes including withdrawals, $10 after 12/16.

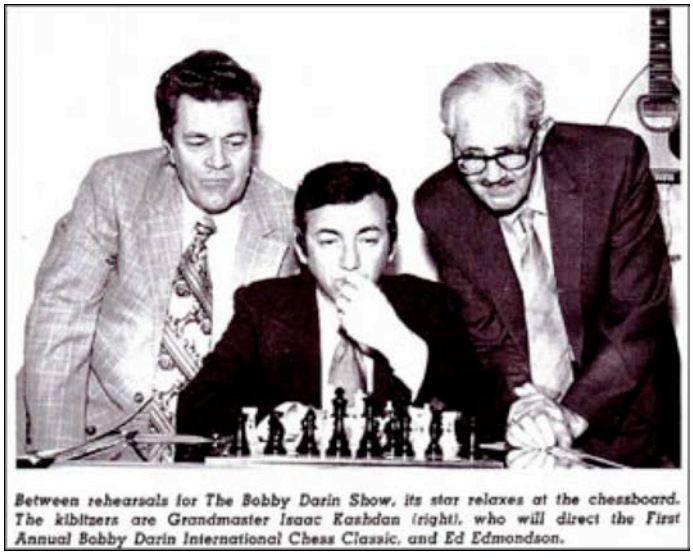
NOTE that the number of players is limited and will be registered on a first come first serve basis. *Register early.*

NS. NC. W. FIDE. JGP for Open and Amateur

players to come). The press release was national news and reported in newspapers around the country.

Now, before you say, "$25,000 doesn't sound like much," let's put it into context. At the time there was very little money in chess. The U.S. Open in 1973 had a TOTAL prize fund of $10,000. The World Open in 1973 had a TOTAL prize fund (all classes) of $15,000. The famous "Lone Pine" tournament that year offered $5500 total. Of course, dollars were worth more back then.

Adjusting for inflation, $25,000 in 1973 is equivalent to *$146,000 in today's money*. In other words, Bobby Darin was offering a prize purse equal to what billionaire Rex Sinquefield offers nowadays in St. Louis!



Between rehearsals for The Bobby Darin Show, its star relaxes at the chessboard. The kibitzers are Grandmaster Isaac Kashdan (right), who will direct the First Annual Bobby Darin International Chess Classic, and Ed Edmondson.

Lawton player Mike Tubbs sent me this promotional photo that went with the tournament announcement.

The excitement level was high for the Bobby Darin Classic at USCF. Here is how part of their press release described the event in January 1973:

Plans have been finalized for the first annual Bobby Darin International Chess Classic, to be conducted under the auspices of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) and the USCF. This all-Grandmaster event will be held in Los Angeles, starting in late October and running for three and one-half weeks.

The Darin Classic will have the biggest purse -- $25,000 -- in the history of tournament chess. Scaled gradually from $5,000 first prize through $1,000 for tenth place (that's bigger than the first prize in many tournaments!), distribution of the purse is especially attractive and equitable. Even last place wins $300 -- and, of course, all of the players' travel and stay expenses are underwritten by the sponsor. Sixteen Grandmasters from ten countries are expected to compete for this bonanza.

Actor-singer Bobby Darin, currently in Los Angeles doing his weekly Friday night *Bobby Darin Show* for NBC television expressed his delight at being able to sponsor a tournament of such high caliber and international standing. "Along with millions of other people, I had my personal interest in chess reawakened last year via the Fischer-Spassky Match. I have found my own involvement in the world of chess to be an extremely rewarding experience, and I hope that this tournament will add to the popularity of the game in this country as well as help to raise the dollar value of all tournament purses to a level more commensurate with the skill and accomplishments of the participants," Darin said.

The Darin Classic will be the first sixteen-man Grandmaster tournament ever held in the Western Hemisphere, and surely it will be one of the greatest events in the history of chess. In all likelihood, Bobby Fischer's 1975 challenger for the World Championship will be in the tournament, since the strongest players in the world are expected to compete.

Unfortunately, although Darin tried to get Fischer to commit to the event, he was unable to do so. But they expected his next challenger to be among those competing.

By March of 1973 Darin's goal of hosting "90%" of the world's top players was coming close to fruition, as the roster of players who had agreed to play included Larsen, Portisch, Hort, Gligoric, R. Byrne (who that year was in the Candidates Matches), Browne, Reshevsky, Kavalek, and Benko. In addition, the U.S.S.R. had been invited to (and had agreed to) send three of the following five invitees: Spassky, Tal, Karpov, Smyslov, or Petrosian. Four others from the top of the rating list would be invited after that.

Even without Fischer this event was massive from a chess perspective – and no doubt Ed Edmondson at the USCF was hoping it would serve as a model for future big-money sponsorships. Also, young American masters

like Tarjan and Rogoff, were starting to think they might be able to make a decent living at chess in the coming Fischer Boom.

So, the USCF had a lot riding on this event.

Had this event been successful, chess history in the United States might have been very different.

Unfortunately, two tragedies struck to sink this opportunity.

The first (minor) tragedy was that the U.S.S.R. decided, for unknown reasons, to move its 1973 Soviet Championship from September to October, creating a conflict with the Bobby Darin Classic. The Soviet players couldn't come in October, and thus to accommodate them Darin and the USCF had to reschedule. Ed Edmondson explained in *Chess Life* that the international schedule was already full for the remainder of 1973, and in 1974 the long series of Candidates Matches for the World Championship (Spassky-Byrne, Karpov-Polugaevsky, Korchnoi-Mecking, Petrosian-Portisch in the quarter finals, and the semi and finals later in the year) meant that for the top players the entire year of 1974 was out of the question for the Darin event.

USCF thus rescheduled the Bobby Darin Classic for January 1975 – a delay that hardly could be afforded. But Darin was still excited about it.

Then the real tragedy struck.

Bobby Darin had always been in ill health, the result of bouts with rheumatic fever dating back to his difficult childhood in the Bronx, New York. It left him with a weak heart. Even though he was only in his mid-thirties, during his live performances from 1969 onward he would often have to take breaks and go backstage for some oxygen. His fans never knew this. In 1971 he had gone through heart surgery to try to correct the problem, and for a while he was better. But by the Summer of 1973 he was having more trouble breathing and was losing weight. He denied gossip that he was ill, and continued to have big plans for many things, including his Chess Classic.

In December of 1973 he reluctantly checked into Cedars of Lebanon hospital in Los Angeles for another round of heart surgery to repair two defective valves.

Talking to a reporter the day before the surgery, *while playing chess with him,* Bobby Darin said, "Everyone thinks I'm at death's door … but I'm not. I'm not dying; I'm going to make a comeback. I'll be up and running, and working and making records before you know it." Darin won their chess game, perhaps the last thing he did before heading into surgery.

But unfortunately while in the recovery room 'complications' developed, and Bobby Darin died on December 20, 1973.

Losing the Initiative

With him died the Bobby Darin International Chess Classic, and much of the hoped for fruits of the momentum created by the Fischer-Spassky Match.

1973 and 1974 thus passed by without any major corporate sponsorships as the chess tide ebbed away. And it drained off completely when Bobby Fischer, stubbornly refusing to negotiate with the equally stubborn FIDE Soviet-influenced bureaucrats, resigned his championship in 1975 and Karpov took over. Fischer wasn't seen again until 1992. Talented players like Ken Rogoff and James Tarjan quit chess, unable to make a living at it.

The Fischer Boom went bust.

The bust is often dated to 1975, when Fischer resigned. But in my view 1973 may have been the key year. The USCF badly needed to follow up with something tangible to maintain the initiative that Fischer had started for the growth of chess, 'consolidating' the advantage like a player consolidates a piece-up position. San Antonio 1972 was a good start.

But the Bobby Darin tragedy that sank the USCF's big hope for 1973 was perhaps the most devastating blow. No other large sponsorships occurred, and over two years went by. To use a chess analogy, it's like the

USCF had a great kingside attack but played too many slow moves and the opponent was able to put up a defense. The USCF fell back to the normal status quo for chess.

The one and only long-lasting result of the Fischer Boom was the players like me, who became lifetime tournament players as an avocation. A pulse of adult membership went through the USCF that has persisted over the years. If you look at graphs of the USCF membership by age you will see a big bulge wherever this group is. We are in our 60s now. The age graph is otherwise flat.

And the Fischer-boom players were active and enthusiastic. The people like me who are tournament directors now, are primarily Fischer Boomers. Strong masters like Seirawan, Fedorowicz, Christiansen, Benjamin and hundreds of others all started chess because of Bobby Fischer.

In Oklahoma, the Fischer Boom 'pulse' was also quite evident. Just one example: look at the list of Homegrown National Masters from Oklahoma; separated by the Decade they started playing serious chess:

Fischer Boom Showing Homegrown Okie Masters, by Decade

- 1960s: D. Ballard, Tom Amburn
- 1970s: Tom Braunlich, David Pensoneau, Robert Harrington, Steve Harrington, Bryan Norman, George Trammell, Wernher Zenteno.
- 1980s: Fred Roper
- 1990s: —
- 2000s: —
- 2010s: Howard Zhong, and now Ryan Amburgy!

Plus the 1970s produced many other strong 2100s who easily could have been NMs if they had wanted, (such as Ted Grose, Rollie Tesh, Ed Wilson, etc.) Today some strong experts like James Tyner, David Zelnick, and Anthony Paolercio might still fill out some of those NM blank spots; and of course the list leaves out many excellent amateur players of Class B and above which similarly exhibit that Fischer Boom statistical bulge. *(Apologies in advance if I left anyone out of this quick list who should be there!)*

You can clearly see from this simple list the effect of the Fischer Boom — and the Fischer Bust.

The Cautionary Tale for 2021

The cautionary tale of 1973 in my view looms large for the upcoming year 2021. Is the brief pulse of popularity of *The Queen's Gambit* going to be used in a meaningful way, or will the initiative peter out as it did before? Is U.S.Chess out there seeking sponsorships now? Are they proposing new chess shows for Netflix or other streaming services? Are they talking with ESPN? I don't know.

And remember, with all the hoopla about the movie and how Internet chess is booming, in the meantime *it has been a devastating year for chess in general*. Scholastic chess is on the rocks in most parts of the country. OSCO in Oklahoma has basically shut down — quite understandably. They lost CXR, their website has not been updated in nine months, and apparently there is no activity. Whatever scholastic stuff going on here or elsewhere is just online.

And of course traditional tournament chess took a huge hit in 2020, along with all other interpersonal events and activities that have been shut down.

Now, speaking as a snarky traditionalist, I know that U.S.Chess doesn't care much any more about traditional chess (as a certain USChess Board Member and many-time recent president of the OCA told me once, "Traditional chess is dead; the future is scholastic and online play.") but still, one wonders what the future of chess is going to be like. Is it all going to move online now? World Champion Magnus Carlsen hinted at this in a recent interview, saying that traditional tournaments will still have a place but he believes that they should move to Fischer-Random play and the classic game should take over the primary status in the form of online Rapid and Blitz championships. His new *Champions Chess Tour* is primarily his vision for professional events and championships – determined by online means.

The trends initiated in 2020 do not look good for chess — for "REAL" chess I mean. But at the risk of sounding old-fashioned, the fact is that online chess is a pale imitation of real chess, where chess fans have enjoyed inspirational chess creation and competition for many centuries. We are very lucky to have billionaire Rex Sinquefield in St. Louis supporting traditional chess in the United States. Without him, where would chess be? Dead? And now that this shift is occurring toward more Internet play away from traditional, I fear the sport is going into its long decline —not entering some golden moment ushered in by the Netflix movie as some commentators are saying.

It's 1973 again for chess! Will this mini-boom become another lost opportunity for chess?

I'm not as optimistic as the media, which will soon move on to the next fad.

On the other hand it heartens me that Ryan Amburgy has steadfastly found ways to continue pursuing traditional chess and improving his game, and was able to earn his NM title this month despite the shutdown in tournaments this year. It's the kind of dedication that reminds me of the Fischer Boom generation. Perhaps there is room for optimism still? We shall see.

By IM John Donaldson

Rewire Your Chess Brain

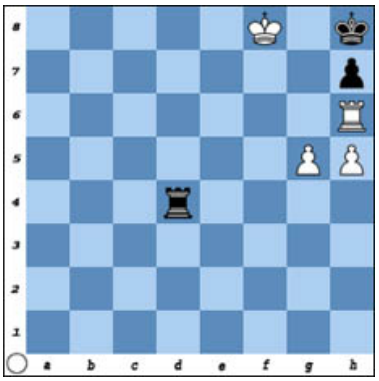
One of the biggest changes in chess instruction this century has been the increased importance attached to making training more well-rounded. The days when tournament competitors would devote all their time to learning opening theory is thankfully past.

Well-rounded learning includes studying well-annotated master games, learning typical middlegame plans, mastering endgames and improving one's ability to calculate. How does one do the latter? Certainly, going through thousands of combination puzzles can help to improve one's vision and tactical ability. That said, if you really want to learn to analyze more concretely there is nothing like trying to solve endgame studies and problems. This is exactly the advice San Diego International Master Cyrus Lakdawala offers in his new book *Rewire Your Chess Brain* (EVERYMAN CHESS 2020, www.everymanchess.com, 528 pages, figurine algebraic, paperback, $32.95)

Endgame studies, game like positions where one learns fundamental theory on the final stage of the game and just how efficiently pieces can work, were a staple of Soviet players. It didn't hurt that in the 20th century many of the best composers lived in the U.S.S.R. and the government published many high-quality books featuring their creative legacy.

These composed positions have grown to become increasingly complex over the past one hundred years and Lakdawala offers a variety of studies to solve of varying degrees of difficulty. Here is one of the simpler ones with the author's comments:

Axel Akerblom *Mora - Tidning* 1923



Beware of instinctual false status bias. This simplified position doesn't appear to be our passport for adventure. After all, two versus one on the same side is nearly always drawn, and many of us would just agree to a draw if we had White's position. That would be a disastrous decision, since this case is an anomaly. How can White snatch at a final opportunity and win?

1.g6!

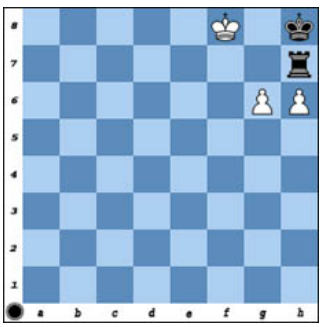
Step 1: Push to g6. At first this appears futile, since 1...Rd7 seems a perfectly adequate response. Still, there's nothing else to try since 1.Rf6? gets nowhere after 1...Rd5 2.g6 hxg6 3.hxg6 Rd8+ 4.Kf7 Rd7+.

1...Rd7

Not 1...Rd8+? 2.Ke7, followed by 3.Rxh7+ and wins. If you want to see the technique here it is: 2...Rd5 3.Rxh7+ Kg8 4.h6 Ra5 5.Rg7+ Kh8 6.Rf7 Ra7+ 7.Kf6 Ra6+ 8.Kg5 Ra5+ 9.Rf5 Rxf5+ 10.Kxf5 Kg8 11.Kf6 Kh8 12.g7+ Kg8 13.h7+! Kxh7 14.Kf7 and White wins in three moves.

2.Rxh7+! Step 2: Take on h7 with the rook.

2...Rxh7 3.h6!



Black to move, White wins!

Step 3: The time has come to liquidate all valuable assets. We push to h6, rather than automatically recapture. Of course 3.gxh7? Kxh7 is a draw. Do you feel displaced from reality? Well, you aren't alone.

Look deeper and we see that White wins, since Black is unable to halt the promotion of our g-pawn.

3...Rxh6

Instead:

a) 3...Ra7 4.g7+ Kh7 5.g8Q+ Kxh6 6.Qd5! wins the rook by force. Let's see how: 6...Rh7 (other moves allow a rapid fork; e.g. 6...Ra1 7.Qe6+ Kh7 8.Qg8+ Kh6 9.Qg7+; or 6...Kg6 7.Qd6+ Kh7 8.Qd3+ Kh6 9.Qe3+; 6...Kh7 7.Qh5# is just mate) 7.Qe4! Rh8+ 8.Kf7 Rh7+ 9.Kf6 and Black is helpless.;

b) 3...Rf7+ is a stalemating cheapo, which we avoid very simply by 4.gxf7! and Black's king has the h7–square.

4.g7+ Kh7 5.g8Q mate

Rewire Your Chess Brain is not just about endgame studies. Approximately two hundred pages are devoted to problems (mates in two, three and four moves). While famous American endgame study composers are relatively few in number that isn't the case with chess problems. Two of the giants in the field, Sam Loyd and William Shinkman, were both from the United States and figure prominently in this book. Problems, due to their seemingly artificial nature, are a bit harder sell for tournament players, but Lakdawala makes a good case for why they are useful.

Those looking for a new tool for their chess training will find *Rewire Your Chess Brain* a user-friendly entry to the fields of endgame studies and problems.

Excerpts for this book, which is available both as a print book and various electronic formats, can be found at https://everymanchess.com/products/rewire-your-chess-brain

Recommended